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SUBJECT: TV CO-OP ON ALASKA GENERATES MAJOR INTEREST PLUS ITS OWN
MEDIA COVERAGE

REF: Tallinn 258 and 773

¶1. Summary. A team of award-winning reporters from the Estonian television program "Subboteya" spent three weeks in Alaska exploring the history of Alaskan Russians, the challenges faced by Alaska's natives, and the lives of Alaskan-Americans. Not only did their documentary air on Estonian TV after their return, the journalists also shared their experiences with other Estonian media outlets, Tallinn high school students, U.S. Embassy staff, as well as through the Mission's signature Regional Outreach Program in the predominantly Russian-speaking region of North-East Estonia. All of these follow-on, interactive events generated even more public interest and media coverage on Alaska and offered Estonia's Russian-speaking youth a positive image of the United States. End summary.

¶2. A three-member team of Estonia's Kanal 2 weekly "Subboteya" TV program spent three weeks on their TV Co-Op in Alaska from October 2-20, 2007. "Subboteja" hosts Aleksandr Zukerman and Mihhail Vladislavlev, as well as cameraman Riho Prees, prepared a three-part documentary on their trip to Alaska, which aired on Estonia's top-ranked Kanal 2 on October 27, November 3, and November 10, 2007. The first piece in the series introduced Alaska and described its nature beauty and history. This segment also covered the annual re-enactment in Sitka of the Alaska Purchase and included an interview with Alaska Governor Sarah Palin. The second part of the documentary focused on Alaska's Native Peoples and their school system - including the Alaskan Olympic Games which feature Native Alaskan sports. The third and the final piece focused on Alaska's Russian past. This episode also showed the Alaskan Russian Orthodox Church today and told the story of Alaska's communities of Russian Old Believers.

¶3. "Subboteya" is the most widely watched Russian-language TV show in Estonia as it is extremely popular among both Russians and Estonians. Thanks to this, the short series on Alaska generated a great deal of public interest and secondary media coverage including articles in "Arter" magazine - the weekly supplement to Estonia's leading newspaper "Postimees" (236,000 readers) as well as in the Russian-language edition of "Postimees" (63,000 readers). The crew's Alaska trip was also covered in the Russian-language "Molodjozh Estonii" (41,000 readers) and as an upcoming event in the weekly TV magazine "Nadal" (120,000 readers).

¶4. On January 28, 2008, co-hosts Zukerman and Vladislavlev gave a talk at a Russian-language high school in Tallinn as part of a program designed to inspire young people to pursue careers in education. The journalists showed clips from their programs and talked about their experiences in Alaska. A group of 30 students asked questions about Alaska's history, geography, and culture. Zukerman said that he wanted to fight stereotypes and asked the students to reserve judgments about the United States until they have first-hand experience. This teaching event was covered in the Russian-language weekly "Den za Dnjom" (53,000 readers).

¶5. Thanks to the team's interest in the subject and the large amount of film they brought back from Alaska, both "Subboteya" and

the Embassy have come up with a number of ideas one how to make further use of this footage. During their post-program briefing on November 17, the "Subboteya" team offered to participate in Post's signature Regional Outreach Program by traveling with and Embassy team to the predominantly Russian-speaking city of Narva in North-East Estonia. The purpose of this outreach visit trip was to do a series of presentations on the team's trip to Alaska to share their experiences with a larger Russian-speaking audience. The idea came to fruition in April 2008 and it represented the first time that the Post included non-Embassy staff in one of its Regional Outreach Programs.

¶16. And so on April 24-25, the "Subboteya" team traveled with PAO and Media Assistant on Embassy Regional Outreach to Estonia's predominantly Russian-speaking Ida-Virumaa region to talk about their Alaskan experience. The journalists met with approximately 200 Estonian- and Russian-speaking students from various schools in Narva and Jhvi. The students showed great interest in the presentation and asked multiple questions on various subjects related to life in Alaska. The "Subboteya" team also gave a talk at the American Corner located at Narva's Central Library to over 30 interested listeners.

¶17. At both the school and library events, "Subboteya" co-hosts Aleksandr Zukerman and Mihhail Vladislavlev showed clips from their show. Zukerman and Vladislavlev described their experiences traveling in Alaska, across the United States, and around the world. Thanks to their interesting, informative, and fun presentation, audiences learned all about Alaska's history, geography, and culture. When speaking at the schools, the journalists stressed that the art of communication is instrumental in insuring the success of Estonia's integration process.

¶18. This successful Regional Outreach visit to North-East Estonia received significant coverage in the Russian-language regional newspaper "Narvskaja Gazeta" on both April 24 and 26 (16,000 readers) as well as on the Russian-language "Pervyi Baltiski Kanal" TV station's evening news (80,000 viewers) on April 28. Local "TV Narva" also interviewed Mihhail Vladislavlev during the visit and broadcast this story on both April 25 and 26.

¶15. Comment: Post will continue working with the "Subboteya" team in order to make the most of what this talented team of journalists has to offer to help promote integration in Estonia.

DECKER